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THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

What response from sinners does God require to obtain the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life? This question in one form or another has been asked many times through the years. Sadly, there are many different and conflicting answers given by men. The Universalists would answer this question by saying that there is no response required of man for salvation that God will save everyone. Others would limit man's response to simple belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Still others would require one to pray "the sinner's prayer" for salvation. Of course, the actual and authoritative answer to this question is revealed to us in the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

The book of Acts contains multiple examples of sinners receiving forgiveness for sin. In Acts 2 the apostles of Jesus, after receiving the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel in the languages of those Jews who had come from every nation under heaven to celebrate the Jewish Pentecost. These, upon hearing the gospel and being convicted of their need for forgiveness of sin, responded with this question: "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Were they told, there's nothing you can do, Jesus has already done it all for you? No. Were they told to "accept Jesus as your personal Savior?" No. Were they told there is nothing more you need to do since you already believe in Jesus? No. Were they told to "pray the sinner's prayer?" No. The divine answer to their questions was "...Repent and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:36-38). Verse 41 tells us that those "who gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." The steps to their salvation are clear. They heard the gospel, believed in Jesus, repented of their sins, were baptized into Christ and were added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47).

Other examples of salvation in the book of Acts include the Ethiopian Eunuch who was taught about Jesus and responded by confessing his faith in Christ and was baptized at his request (Acts 8:35-39). Saul, after coming face to face with the risen Savior, and thus becoming a believer in Jesus was baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 9:18; 22:16). Both Lydia and the jailer heard the gospel and were baptized (Acts 16). When one puts these records of conversion together the steps that brought salvation were hearing, believing in Jesus, repentance of sin, confession of faith in Christ and baptism for the remission of sins. Those willing to make this same response today will experience the very same results. One who does so will receive the forgiveness of sins, the hope of eternal life, and be added by the Lord to His church.